

F. Solon ends Debt Slavery

1. In times of drought, Athens's commoners often starved. If they wanted to survive they had to borrow food from the aristocrats.
2. If they could not repay their debt they would lose their property and become slaves.
3. By 594 BC, so many commoners had become slaves that they rebelled.
4. An archon named Solon was put in charge to try to avoid a war between the aristocrats and the commoners.
5. First, Solon *emancipated* the debt slaves, and returned their property to them.
6. Second, he *abolished* debt slavery. Hence forth it would be illegal to make any contract that would result in slavery.
7. However, Solon refused to *redistribute* property from the aristocrats to the commoners.

G. Peisistratus as Tyrannos

1. The commoners were not satisfied with Solon's laws, so they chose a respected leader named Peisistratus to be the tyrannos of Athens.
2. By taking land from the aristocrats and giving it to the commoners, Peisistratus made himself very popular.
3. Aristocrats who resisted his authority were exiled.

H. The Return of Aristocracy

1. The nobles exiled by Peisistratus went to Delphi, where an important religious authority, the "Oracle" of Apollo was located.
2. They gave money to the Oracle, and the Oracle promised to find them help.
3. From then on, each time the king of Sparta (a powerful city-state) would seek out the Oracle's guidance, it would tell him that "Athens must be set free."
4. Eventually, since most Greeks took the Oracle's advice seriously, the Spartan king decided to provide the Athenian exiles with an army, and they retook the city.

I. Cleisthenes and the Birth of Democracy

1. A new leader named Cleisthenes convinced the aristocracy to share power with the commoners.
2. To encourage the aristocrats and commoners to work together, Cleisthenes divided all the people into "demes" (areas like modern counties). This made it harder to organize the government in terms of their normal *factions*.
3. The laws of Athens were now decided by a majority vote of representatives from demes.
4. Since the aristocrats no longer ruled over the commoners, this new form of government was a step up from the archaic plateau. Now majority ruled.